United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General holds meeting in Paris with Foreign Minister of France Roland Dumas; discussions focus on Secretary-General's report on peace and security, United Nations operation in Cambodia, situation in Yugoslavia and in Somalia.

+ Secretary-General, in message marking International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking tomorrow, calls for concerted efforts in fighting scourge.

+ While fighting is continuing in Sarajevo, Chief of Staff of UNPROFOR, General Louis MacKenzie, announces unilateral decision by Serbian side to stop shelling civilian targets immediately and to withdraw its heavy artillery.

+ Possible impact on peace talks of Labour Party victory in Israeli elections discussed by Symposium on Palestine question.

+ Total number of contraceptive users has risen tenfold in developing world in the past 25 years, according to new report by World Health Organization.

+ Meeting in Tehran of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific is told that self-reliance is key to industrial and technological progress in that region.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met this morning in Paris with French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, with whom he discussed his recent report to the Security Council containing various proposals for enhancing the United Nations role in peace and security. Discussions also focused on the situation in Yugoslavia, the operation of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) as well as the United Nations attempts to find a solution to the conflict in Somalia.

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The Secretary-General was scheduled to meet later in the day with his Special Representative for Somalia, Mohamed Sahnoun, who will travel with the Secretary-General to Dakar for the Summit meeting of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), scheduled for 29 and 30 June.

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While calling on Governments and intergovernmental organizations to step up their cooperation in the fight against drugs, the Secretary-General has stressed that "every effort must be made to tap the energy and determination which exists at the local level among families, teachers, religious leaders, social workers" and others. Mr. Boutros-Ghali made the appeal in his message to mark the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, which will be observed tomorrow, 26 June.

The Secretary-General pointed out in his message that the eradication of the drug problem was a costly task. It was not enough to destroy an opium crop or a coca plant; "something else must be substituted for it; something that is as financially attractive to the cultivator as opium or coca". He called for concerted action at the global level to meet the challenge.

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In Sarajevo, the Chief of Staff of United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR), General Louis MacKenzie, announced today that the Serbian side had decided unilaterally to stop shelling civilian targets immediately and to move its heavy artillery to "concentration points" back some 15 to 20 km from their original positions.

A United Nations spokesman, informing correspondents about the new development, noted "this would be an important agreement, if observed. In the past, we have seen many agreements and very little action". He said the shelling was actually continuing in Sarajevo.

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Panelists and participants in the Ninth North American Regional Symposium of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) on the Question of Palestine discussed yesterday, among other things, the possible effect on the peace talks of the Labour Party victory in the Israeli elections on Tuesday, and the role of NGOs in presenting the Palestinian problem to the public and in influencing Governments to act.

During the general discussion, hope was expressed that Israel would change its position and agree to a just and fair solution to the Palestinian problem. However, the majority of panelists and participants expressed reservations about Yitzhak Rabin, the leader of the Labour Party, who was described as an opponent to a Palestinian State.

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The total number of contraceptive users had risen tenfold in the developing world in the past 25 years, according to a new report by the World Health Organization (WHO). The study, entitled "Reproductive Health, A Key to a Brighter Future", is a comprehensive compilation of data on global reproductive health.

While 500,000 women die each year from complications of pregnancy and childbirth, and about 150,000 abortions are induced each day, the report says some 300 million couples who do not want any more children still do not have access to family planning.

The study was co-sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Bank.

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Developing Asian-Pacific countries were urged to look inwardly to the region to help promote their industrial and technological advancement at the opening session of a six-day United Nations meeting in Teheran on Tuesday, organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

Addressing the meeting, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Seiko Takahashi, said that in the last two decades, the region, led by the newly industrializing economies of countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong and the Republic of Korea, and the Association of the South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), had enjoyed the highest economic growth rates in the world and promised so in the coming years. She noted that the current economic imbalances, fast growth of capital markets and rapid technological progress, offered new opportunities and challenges for the region's developing countries.

Also addressing the meeting, Iran's Minister of Industry, Mohamed Reza Nemat-zadeh, said the emergence of trading blocs in Europe and in North America would be at the expense of the economies of the ESCAP region. He added that the creation of a climate favourable to technological growth, keeping pace with new technologies, together with the readiness to absorb tomorrow's technology were among the most critical aspects of economic development.

The meeting is being attended by senior officials of 27 countries to map out a regional plan of action for industrial and technological development. The plan will be presented for consideration by the Ministers of Industry and Technology of those countries on 28 June.

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